

A [Modified] Framework for Supervision: 8 Key Components

By Matt Modrcin, MSW

These 8 components are presented as a guide to assess what occurs in supervision. They can also serve as a reminder to the supervisor as to what can or should be discussed when case material is presented.

- Contain anxiety. It is difficult for people to learn if their anxiety is too high. Develop strategies to reduce the anxiety of the supervisee. Younger supervisees often have anxiety related to their sense of competency and need reassurance, support, and "how to" information about the work. Discuss anxiety openly and help older supervisees bring their questions and mistakes to supervision.
- Supervision is a relational and developmental process. The process of supervision often parallels the helping relationship. Use the supervisory process to teach the process of the helping relationship by calling attention to what is occurring in supervision, what is working and what is not working, reactivity, language, words, and the emotional themes related to what is being discussed.
- Supervision is about teaching professional accountability. Establish norms that reflect professional accountability. This relates to written documents, time, confidentiality, phone calls, oral communication, and agreements that were reached. It is important to notice these details and discuss them in supervision.
- Create an educational or teaching focus as a component of supervision. Supervision is about teaching. It is teaching about standards of care, assessment, when and how to ask questions, how to make referrals, when to intervene, how to step back in the work, and it is the teaching of the process of the helping relationship that is critical in terms of long term professional development. Theory, and intervention methods and techniques relevant to specific populations and practice settings are also taught.
- Increasing the supervisee's affective capacity. Empathy is identified as a core component of the therapeutic relationship. Working with the affective capacity of the supervisee is critical in terms of their emotional understanding of what is being said to them by the people they are working with. Helping them to not over identify or under identify with the emotional content presented in the work is essential in order to facilitate or stay connected to the person with whom they are working.
- Understanding the importance of professional/clinical boundaries and boundary violations. Helping the supervisee understand the importance of boundaries and when boundary violations occur is a critical component in supervision. With a younger, less experienced supervisee, operating from a less flexible approach to boundaries is helpful in developing a framework for understanding the importance of boundaries in the helping relationship.

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- Be clear about the form of supervision utilized. This format needs to be clarified before implementation. Individual or group formats can be utilized to meet the learning needs of the supervisee and the efficient use of time from an agency perspective.
- Integrate ethics and cultural/contextual issues in the conversations of supervision. Ethical issues arise as a part of the clinical process and must be addressed on a regular basis. Having access to the ethical guidelines from your professional organization can serve as a reference point for discussion. Cultural, gender, and socio-political concerns form the context in which clinical work occurs. These issues should be explored with the supervisee to determine their understanding of how these issues are influencing their work with people.

Matt Modrcin, Ph.D. is Director of the MSW Program at the Portland State University Graduate School of Social Work in Oregon. He teaches advanced direct human service practice and has a private practice in clinical social work and consultation.

This information was obtained from the following website:
<http://www.ssw.pdx.edu/mswfield/forfi/pgSupervisionFramework.php>